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DEBBIE ROCHON ON ACTING

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cover
Debbie Rochon from up n'
coming film HELLBLOCK 13.

ONE MORE PINT



SCAN! Where the hell did this come from? Let me explain...

Sometime last year, I can't remember when exactly, I was approached by J.R. Bookwalter about possibly taking over the publishing duties of his movie magazine ALTERNATIVE CINEMA. At that time publishing had just started in it's downward spiral and I wasn't too sure about bringing another mag into my stable of publications. I pondered the idea for a while and then returned with an offer to take over the magazine. I was too late. J.R. had already signed a deal with a new video distributor called EL Independent. So the idea was dropped.

A few months ago J.R. Bookwalter was planning to make his big move from Ohio to Hollywood and this time decided to sell ALTERNATIVE CINEMA lock, stock and barrel. He again approached me to see if I would be interested. I knew the number of readers wasn't anything tremendous and the publishing industry was in worst shape than the first time he approached me, but I started getting ideas.

If I were to take over the magazine completely I would be able to change the direction of it as well. AC had gotten pretty hostile in its last few issues and the magazine seemed set up more to promote the products for sale rather than anything else. I started thinking, what if I were to get articles on how to handle various aspects of making movies, distribution, and even analyzing equipment. What if I were to give away free ads to actors, directors and others in the b-movie world to promote their availability. What if I were to offer free ads for people to sell their used equipment. I could turn the whole magazine into a meeting ground for all b-movie makers and the people that are just plain interested in all aspects of b-movie making. I was started to get excited.

After going back and forth with J.R. for a while it looked like we were finally honing in on a deal. My main idea behind buying the ALTERNATIVE CINEMA title as opposed to starting a brand new publication was that it already had an audience - I wouldn't have to start from scratch. Plus, I was getting tons of back issues that I would be able to add to my stock of magazines that I have for resale. My offer was modest, but I felt it was fair. J.R. wanted to unload it and needed the money for his move... then EL came back into the picture.

Next thing I knew EL had bought out the magazine. I have no idea what J.R. got for the mag, but it

was obviously more than what I had offered - All I know was one day we were talking about arrangements of meeting on the interstate during his move so I could pick up the stock, and the next I find out I'm out of the running.

I wasn't pissed, you obviously go with the best deal. If J.R. was offered more money for the magazine, he would be a fool not to take it. It was just that I had all these great ideas and had already told several people what I had planned to do. These people were equally excited and were already contributing things to the new AC.

I felt the whole basis of this joining of the b-movie community was too good to just forget, so thus was the birth of SCAN.

SCAN is going to be completely supported by its readers. Hopefully you'll like what you see, subscribe and keep it going. The pre-sales on this first issue were really pretty good and I'm excited about the future. As I stated earlier - this will be a joining place for b-movie makers and enthusiasts. If you have made movies and have ideas to share, let me know. Anyone that makes a movie is bound to learn things that are of value to other movie makers. Also, you'll want to put in your free ad to sell your used equipment or list yourself in b-movie listing of actors, actresses, directors, producers, SFX person, etc. So, in future issues of SCAN you'll be able to pick up a copy and find who you need for your project and be able to contact them. This listing could prove invaluable.

Future issues will be more in-depth on cameras and editing equipment. Also expect to see lots of "making of" articles as well as interviews with people in the business.

One thing I am really excited about is the joining of forces between myself and Ron Bonk of SALT CITY VIDEO. In our efforts to get low-budget films out to the people we are creating a new distribution system where we both will put our efforts into the videos we acquire (see article on page 27).

So, welcome to the first issue - I hope you enjoy it. I look forward to your letters and comments, be sure to write. We are still structuring the magazine and need to hear what you want to see more of, and less of. Only by your input will the magazine grow, and the b-movie industry prosper.

Thanks for your support,


Hugh Gallagher

COMING SOON!

TENDER FLESH



TENDER FLESH RELEASED IN SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION:

A deal has finally been struck with Brook Edwards Productions for the release of the special edition of Jess Franco's **TENDER FLESH**. Limited to 250, this special collection includes: **TENDER FLESH** - the complete unedited movie, **BDN APPETITE: THE MAKING OF TENDER FLESH**, The European Trash Cinema Special on Jess Franco with complete transcription of a 4-hour interview, *Dracula* #29 with information behind **TENDER FLESH** as well as an interview with lead actress Amber Newman. **PLUS:** A 100-page book with the complete script and photos from the movie (note: This book is being made exclusively for this collectors edition pack, and cannot be purchased any other way). All of this material is boxed together with special artwork signed and numbered by Jess Franco himself, accompanied by a certificate of authenticity signed by producers Kevin Collins and Hugh Gallagher.

This fantastic collection is currently your only way you can see **TENDER FLESH**, and once this special 250 edition is gone... it's gone! This limited

edition is available for \$100 plus \$5 shipping from **BROOK EDWARDS PRODUCTIONS**, 2216 TROY ROAD #256, EDWARDSVILLE, IL 62025. (See back cover for advertisement). This special edition will only be available through **BROOK EDWARDS PRODUCTIONS**. It will not be available in stores or wholesaled out to any other mail order companies.

THE VICIOUS SWEET - A popular scream queen is abducted by her greatest fan. Stars Sashe Graham, Robert Lucote. Directed by Ron Bank. Produced by Jerry O'Sullivan. Release: Oct. 17, 1997.

DARK DESCENT - Anthology featuring early work from Salt City Home Video. Includes **I'VE KILLED BEFORE** and **PERMANENT WAVES**. Stars Theresa Constantine, James L. Edwards, Arianne Albright, Jason Burke. Directed by Ron Bank and Matthew Jason Welch. Produced by Ron Bank. Release: Nov. 17, 1997.

GUT-PILE - After a hunting accident, a man's grisly remains return for revenge! Stars Jeff Forsyth, Ed Mastin, Sashe Graham. Directed by Jerry O'Sullivan. Produced by Ron Bank. Release date not set yet.

STRAWBERRY ESTATES - An experi-



ment is sent into the closed grounds of a haunted former insane asylum. Stars Debbie Rochon, Tina Krause, Tom Minion. Directed by Ron Bank. Produced by Jerry O'Sullivan. Release date not set yet.



SHADOW TRACKER - Vietnam vet hunts down vampires and an old army buddy who he fears is one of the undead. Starring Bruce G. Hellenbeck, Voni Powell, Amy Neple, Tom Ecobell, Mary Guernier. Written, produced and directed by Joe Bagnardi. To be released on Halloween. (see page 32 for ad)

KITTY KILLERS - Borderline Entertainment presents zen, bondage, tofu, diapers, gangrene, poetry, beauty queens, murder, coffee, torture. **KITTY KILLERS!** Starring Frank Alexander, Tim Ryens, Dan Rowland, Mike Smith, Ronnie Spector and Michelle White. Written and directed by Todd Reynolds. Available fall '97.





By: Debbie Rochon

Don't think you can walk onto a film set and give 50%, 75% or even 90%. If you can't give it all, don't give at all. Or it will surely come back to haunt you.

In the business of acting there are a few important things to keep in mind. The composition of the performance is one of the most consequential decisions you'll make. Every art form in one way or another strives to be like music. There is a beginning, middle and end to each piece, peppered with various crescendos throughout. The first thing I do when I pick up a script is graph the character's experiences as though it were a song. Everybody knows that any given character will go through some sort of change during the course of the movie. The actor's job is to clarify who they're portraying and how everything that happens affects the character. For instance, in *HELLBLOCK 13* I was given the role of Tara who is the illegitimate child of Charles Manson. She's on death row about to be electrocuted, and at the top of the film she meets her executioner (who is played by Gunnar Hansen). Now the average person might think this would be a traumatic moment in their life, but because of who Tara is, she is



*Please the Gods
from HELLBLOCK 13*

thrilled to meet him. Tara loves death. Whether it's death that is caused by her, or if it's her own, she finds it very exciting. So her emotionality was high from the first scene. Seeing this peculiar feature is an anthology, the story keeps coming back to our characters, giving us time to build the tension. Our segment's premise: Tara has written a book of horror stories during her stay on death row, a number of them she channeled from the spirits of the

women who had previously been executed there. She convinces Gunnar's character to listen to a couple of tales before he escorts her to the chair. Gunnar, as the character, had to grapple with the possibility that the brutal stories she was telling could, in fact, be true. If you broke the scenes down even more you could say there are three 'arrangements' going on at once; mine, Gunnar's and the scene as a whole. If compared to music it would be a lot

closer to a Bernard Hermann score than say Copacabana by Barry Manilow.

NUDITY. You either like it or you don't. In my opinion a lot of actresses spend far too much time and energy denouncing it. It's really not worth all the press that it gets! Sexuality is a very large part of human nature and that's what actors are hired for, to reenACT the human condition. I recently saw a film that featured a love scene between the two lead characters and they stayed completely clothed. They should have either dropped the scene if the actors didn't want to make love on camera, or they SHOULD have been without costume. When was the last time you had sex and never took off a stitch of clothing? It would be impossible. Whether you are willing to perform naked or not it's completely your choice, and I personally respect either decision. Don't, however, make a career out of putting down those who do, there really is enough work for everyone. We all choose our own career path and by centering yours around claims of what you do or don't do really takes away from the real reason you wanted to be in the film business: to ACT. If you are cast in a film that requires nudity and you accept it, fine. Nudity has been a part of film making since the first roll of celluloid was threaded through a camera! Be confident in the decisions you make.

Another aspect to consider when fleshing out your role is opposites. This can be a very powerful tool. If you're working on a comedy, of course you have to use tempo and timing, but to give an outstanding performance you must consider the tragedy. Where there's one extreme there's the other. In most cases your 'opposite' will be living and expressing deep inside the character creating conflict within. When I was working on *TROMEEO AND JULIET* I worked with potent polarities.

My character Ness was hopelessly in love with Juliet, but knew deep down that Juliet wanted to be with Tromeo. Considering Ness was an unselfish person, she was willing to not only let Juliet go, but help her get together with Tromeo so that she could be happy. Working with two extremes really gives you a lot as an actor. You don't have to wait for the conflict from the outside world to affect you, you're already filled with feelings and the need to express them and that's a good place to be as an actor.

I worked for a long time in the theater before acting in film. Something that I found to be very challenging was the need to work quickly on a film set. I was accustomed to rehearsing for 6-8 weeks on a stage play, now I was being introduced to my fellow actors a few minutes before we were to shoot a scene! This can be very jarring if you've worked mostly on the stage. At first I felt very unconnected, but with time I learned how to work fast and still feel like I'm completely grounded in the situation. The bulk of your preparation will be done at home before you ever reach the set, but you really won't feel completely comfortable until you start working with the other actors. Working on low budget movies like



ALIEN AGENDA: ENDANGERED SPECIES and **STRAWBERRY ESTATES**, it is too costly to have the actors brought into town a few days before shooting, so you really have to be open and able to work on the fly. What you're able to express convincingly right on the spot will make or break a production that can't fall back on costly special effects to save it. Megan, my character in **ALIEN AGENDA**, is an alien hunter and is faced with having to kill her own husband when he turns out to be an extraterrestrial. As Theresa in **ESTATES** I'm faced with the task of taking my own life when I become possessed with a poltergeist. In both cases I played emotionally charged characters which was really great! Why? Because everything you're feeling as the actor is usable as the character. If I've worked on my character but I still don't feel comfortable playing the scene, I can use all of those feelings that come up on set. Everything you're thinking or feeling is usable! There's never a single moment when you're not feeling something, whether it's giddiness, rage or boredom! So when in doubt channel exactly what you the actor are really experiencing into the scene. Truthfulness is the most important element to a memorable performance.

One of the most valuable tools you can have as an actor is the ability to take direction. Even though you've prepared the role as you see it, you have to be loose enough to change your approach at a moment's notice. There are three types of directors that I've worked with. First the actor's director. This director knows how to talk to an actor and work with him/her to get what is needed. The second is the 'line reading' director. He will give you the exact reading of each line and will expect you to deliver them the same way he did. Although this is not the most creative way to

work, you have to be able to listen and translate what he's saying so that it will make sense to you. The most important thing in this case is to try and stay connected even though you feel more like a monkey than an actor. The third is the 'absent' director. This director just doesn't give you anything. It can be confusing because you're not sure if he's silent because you're right on



Whether you are willing to perform naked or not it's completely your choice, and I personally respect either decision. Don't, however, make a career out of putting down those who do, there really is enough work for everyone.

track, or if he's quiet because he's not impressed with what you're doing. This is exactly why you must be completely prepared before you arrive on set. Don't expect the director to flesh out your character for you. Some actors actually think they'll be 'inspired' once they start shooting their scenes. If you go into the work situation expecting no help you'll be much better off. Then when you do get creative input, it becomes a pleasant surprise!

Most importantly: Love what you do. If you've accepted a role then it's your job to treat it like it's the most important film in the history of cinema, at least while you're shooting it! Don't work on a project if you don't feel good about it. Being positive throughout the shoot is the only way a proficient thespian should act. We've all encountered cast or crew members who complain or bad mouth the production or each other and this is truly unprofessional behavior. I have never met a sour grape who went on to have great success! There's no place for negativity in a creative situation and we all need to strive to make the film as great as it can possibly be.

I would like to share with you quotes by famous actors who have inspired me.

CHRISTOPHER WALKEN "A good actor is like a racehorse or a Ferrari. If a cylinder is missing on a Chevy, it doesn't matter much. But if something's not working right on a Ferrari, it makes a big difference. It's the 3% that makes the difference between good and great."

KEVIN BACON "I get scared about my career a lot. I get scared that I won't be able to handle a role. If I don't work on it enough, halfway through the picture I freak out. I have a love-hate thing with the movie business. I see all the lies and I want to run off and not come back. On the other hand, I feel so lucky that sometimes I have to catch my breath."

KEVIN KLINE "Sometimes I think of quitting the business. I've always had respect for people who can quit. I do love acting though, being able to live for a few hours a day on a much more intense level. When I'm not working a part of me is dead."

TREAT WILLIAMS "Always give your best performance! There's a famous story: Billy Wilder told Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis, when they were doing **SOME LIKE IT HOT** with Marilyn Monroe, that they'd better be at their best in every take because the one she's good in is the one they'll use!"



WHAT ABOUT ACTORS?

by Kevin Lindenmuth

No matter which way you cut it, having decent actors can greatly help your film both in its quality and in its eventual sales. Of course, having a great script also helps, but that's a different article...

For bit parts, nonspeaking parts, and extra bodies (as in crowd shots) you can use friends and even relatives. But for your main characters, use professional actors. How do you get them, you ask? Whether or not you live in a big city or a small town put an ad in the local paper or local actors paper, citing the types needed, call the local stage theaters and college theaters to see if anyone is interested, and have them send you headshots and resumes.

To cast my first film, *VAMPIRES & OTHER STEREOTYPES*, I put an ad in *BACKSTAGE* (NYC's actors paper) and received thousands (!) of headshots from actors. I had to go to the post office in a van to pick up the three garbage bags filled with photos and it took me two weeks just to open and go through all the mail, then two solid weekends to have auditions and a following day for "callbacks." In retrospect I think I spent a little too much time doing this and saw too many people.

To cast *ADDICTED TO MURDER* I had several people cast for parts while I was still writing the script. Mick McCleery of *ONE BY ONE FILM & VIDEO*, who also played the demon "ERIC" in *VAM-*



Laura McLaughlin

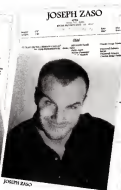
PIRES & OTHER STEREOTYPES, was in mind for the main character, Joel Winter, from the film's conception. Laura McLaughlin, who made her debut with *VAMPIRES & OTHER STEREOTYPES*, was cast as Rachel, the vampire friend. Rick Poli, another veteran of the same movie, was given a cameo as a building manager. Other assigned parts went to novelist/editor Gordon Linzner for the "expert on serial killers" and screenwriter/director Ron Ford (*ALIEN FORCE*, *MARK OF DRACULA*) as true crime novelist Polonia. For the other parts I put another ad in *BACKSTAGE*, though I didn't receive nearly as much mail because I was more specific in my description of the parts. This time I kept the auditions down to one weekend since I had already eliminated many people from the headshots and resumes they sent. Everyone chosen from the auditions fit the characters very well, from Sewell Whitney as the tabloid TV host to Sasha Graham (recently of *THE VICIOUS SWEET*) as Angie. In fact, as soon as Sasha walked in and started reading the lines for Angie I knew she had the part, it



CANDICE MEADE

just clicked. And I think she did an exceptional job as the evil vampire.

As far as payment I was very up front and told them that there was none. This wasn't to scam them or be cheap. It's simply because I didn't have the money and didn't want to promise them any that I didn't or may never have. I said that in return for being in the movie they'd get a copy of the finished video to use on their reel and that they'd get publicity in the various genre mags, which they did. Lots of publicity, in fact. Almost every magazine article, whether published in the US, England, Spain or Australia, used a photo of Sasha or Laura. Sasha even made the cover of two magazines, *SHOCKING IMAGES* and *SAMHAIN* (UK). Subsequently these actresses got more auditions for other movie projects and cast in a few New York plays. To quote a recent issue of *SHOCK CINEMA* "Sasha Graham continues to prove she's one of the finest actresses on the indie scene". She can be seen in Junior Bookwalter's *POLYMORPH* (1996), my own *THE ALIEN AGENDA: OUT OF THE DARK-*



NESS, and Ron Bonk's *THE VICIOUS SWEET*, which may be her best role to date. Laura moved to California several years ago and was recently the body double of the slain girl in Clint Eastwood's *ABSOLUTE POWER*.

In making your first few films I don't think it's necessary that you pay the actors, though do have them sign a contract with what you agree to do so that it's all in writing. For any agreements or deals also have a written contract so that there's no confusion about anything. Remember, you're starting out in your film career, you're probably investing all your own money and there's a chance you won't make this money back when the film is completed. So why should they be making anything if they're also starting out? You're all in the same boat. Also, money seems to distort things. You can pay them when you eventually make your Big Budget Epic.

ABOUT AUDITIONS:

1) When you have auditions it's best to have "open" auditions and tell the actors to show up be-

tween this hour and that hour. This will save you hours of needless scheduling. If they have to wait a few minutes they'll have to wait. Actors are used to waiting.

2) Rent a space or get a space where there's enough room to accommodate you, an assistant, and all the actors who show up. Check into local theaters for rehearsal space—they charge fairly cheap hourly rates. Do not have auditions in your house, apartment or garage. This only succeeds in making your feature seem like a cheap production!

3) Do not give your home number out to actors while you are still making casting decisions. This is a mistake—you'll get calls all hours of the day and night. You call them and tell them the "when" and "where" of the audition and what it's for.

4) Videotape the auditions and before each actor/actress auditions have them state their name and phone number. Also, have them write this down while they're waiting.

5) Type up a synopsis/description of what the film is about, when it will be shot, and maybe some details about yourself and your "production company". Also be clear that there's no pay (this information should also be in the newspaper ad). Then make a hundred copies of this paper and stack them where the actors are waiting. This will save you hours of time explaining the same thing over and over, not to mention your voice box.

6) Have the actors either do a monologue of their own or read a page or two from the script. No more than ten-fifteen minutes per person. It's usually not a good idea to read lines—you're not an actor and this usually irritates the actors. Let them be on their own.

7) Hopefully you can keep auditions down to two days. Just call the people back who you're interested in casting. It's understood that if they don't get a call back they didn't get the job. Such is the lot of the actor.

8) After you cast the people you

want to play the characters give them all a copy of the script to read because some of your first choices may bail out for various reasons. That's why you videotaped the auditions, so you'll have back up choices.

9) If you have a bad feeling about an actor—if you see they have an obvious attitude or ego problem and that they may cause problems during the shoot (such as quitting halfway through or not showing up) I'd say not to use them.

10) Do not cast your girlfriend or boyfriend in a role, particularly a lead role, just because they want to star in a movie. It's hard enough making a movie without having to deal with the baggage that comes along with personal relationships. To have them on set could be a problem. Recently there was a low budget director

who put his girlfriend on the box of one of his movies (she wasn't even in it!) and then had her star in his next two "opus's", which I think all but destroyed any sort of career or notoriety he may have had. Don't make the same mistake!

DIRECTING ACTORS:

It's expected that actors will memorize their lines—and they'll come up with their own interpretations on how to perform and have plenty of questions about the characters. You should know all the answers to all of their questions because you created these characters. Even though it may not be written in the script you know that such and such character was probably picked on in Jr. High School and that's why he's a serial killer—and so on. Actors will look to you for answers, which you, as a director, must

have.

Actors should also do things the way you want them to, how you envision them saying the line in that "movie in your mind", match the reality to how you pictured it when you were writing the scene. My favorite thing to say on VAMPIRES & OTHER STEREOTYPES when an actor suggested something for a character that I didn't agree with was "That's a good idea but that's a different movie." If they were persistent I'd shoot one take of the scene their way—tape is cheap—and when it came to editing I usually ended up using my version.

Conversely, sometimes actor's suggestions can greatly improve the dramatics of a scene. Go with what feels right but don't be overly influenced by other people. The one good thing about making an independent film is that it's your film, not film by committee.

MORE ABOUT ACTORS

by Hugh Gallagher

I'd like to give a flip side to Kevin Lindenmuth's views on casting for your movie. Although I agree with the majority of what was written, there are a couple aspects that may need to be approached in a different way, depending on your situation. I'm basing my analysis on what happened to me...

ADVERTISING IN THE LOCAL PAPER:

Living in New York and living in Southern Illinois is kind of like comparing apples to oranges. When I was looking for people to be in my movie GORGASM I ran an ad in a local free paper simply looking for persons interested in being in, or helping out on a low-budget horror movie. The title of the movie or it's theme was never mentioned.

Although I received numerous replies (the majority unusable), I was amazed when I was visited by an undercover policeman who wanted to get to the bottom of it.

what I was doing. According to him, I had to be checked out to make sure I wasn't a child pornographer or a Satan worshipper. How he came to these conclusions from this generic ad is beyond me, but I became very paranoid.

Unfortunately most smaller towns associate anything done on video with pornography, and they are quick to assume that is what you are doing. Let's face it, most smaller towns are pretty boring and are always looking for something to shake things up. Give them the seed and they will grow a monster.

Please simply take this as a word of warning. Evaluate your material and your town. Most places won't care and will be excited about participating, but some will do everything in their power to shut you down, just to give themselves something to do. You know your area, and you know your material - simply judge both be-

fore making a commitment to have yourself exposed to your town and potential bad publicity and hassles.

NUDITY:

A lot of no-budget flicks utilize nudity to compensate for their lack of budget. It's cheaper than SPFX, and quicker to shoot.

Although you will probably find the majority of your actors for free, you will probably run into a money situation when you look for an attractive female to disrobe in front of your camera. Most of them want more than just "exposure", and wish to be compensated.

The big thing with no-budget movie makers is to offer percentages of potential profits from the movie to actors for their participation. But, if you truly plan to pay, this can become a book keeping nightmare. In my own situation I have found it cheaper and

less headaches if you simply agree on a price right off the bat. That way once the movie is for sale there isn't that natural assumption by the actors that you are making millions while they are only getting paid a pittance. If they know up front that they are getting "X" amount of dollars for their participation, everything is cut and dry. If for some reason you don't have the money and they want a percentage of the profits, give them a cut off number. They get 10% of the profits until they reach "X" amount of dollars, at which time they will be considered paid in full.

I know everyone is pinching pennies when they go to make their movie, but most people are willing to work for a reasonable rate - spending a few hundred dollars to secure someone that will help your end product is definitely worth the trouble. Most people that are remotely involved with movies know that there is minimal money to be made and usually are pretty reasonable with a working price. A word of caution: Don't pay til the movie is in the can! Giving someone a substantial advance or paid up front for a job may not show up when it's time to shoot - and you can pretty much forget about getting your money back. Wait until all the scenes are shot with the person that is to be paid and when they are done, pay them. It's pretty simple if you keep it simple.

The big problem with nudity is for newcomers, they think they can do a nude scene but when it comes time to actually disrobe, they have a change of heart. Being apprehensive for first timers is understandable, but when someone agrees to do a script as written they should do so! Nothing is more irritating than someone coming up to you saying they don't feel they can do something, especially after you have been shooting with them for days and you're too deep into it to kick them out (which they know). I tend to ask people if they have any problems

with the script, are they prepared to do everything that is written, and do they have any questions or concerns about any particular scenes. It's best to get this out in the open at the beginning than to get into a lengthy discussion when it's time to do the actual scene.

Obviously, if you get some brain storm in the middle of the movie and decide to throw in some bonus nude scene that wasn't in the script and your actor begins to complain - well, you'll probably be up shit creek. Unless you are able to talk them into it, you'll probably lose the scene. Just as you expect an actress to do what is



written in the script, the actress must be confident that you aren't going to make major changes or throw in additional things in the middle of shooting.

I have two memorable occasions where the nudity items came into play. I was acting as cameraman on David Williams movie METAL NOIR when we came to a scene where the lead actress was to make love to the lead actor. We had been shooting for days prior to this and the actress decided she couldn't do the nude scene. She knew it was in the script, she had agreed to do it, but now she had a change of heart. After the director talked to her at length without any luck he sent the assistant director in, who in turn sent me in and we basically took turns trying to convince her to do the scene. Two hours later we started shooting the scene... A lot of wasted time trying to talk someone into doing something they

had already known about and agreed upon months before. This was her first time doing something of this nature - actresses that have been in the business for a while and have played such parts will usually give you little if any trouble, as long as you spell out what you expect them to do.

On another occasion I was shooting my movie GORE WHORE. There was a scene in the movie where the reanimated dead whore is sitting on the floor of her dilapidated house with a big jar of blood from one of her victims. I had worked out this scene where the camera would circle her as she drank the blood and then she would spit the blood out on the camera lens and everything would fade to red into the next scene. I knew it would be very eerie and bizarre. We had shot several other scenes at the house and this was the last thing to be done. I had heard the lead actress arguing with her boyfriend complaining that she didn't understand why she had to be nude for this scene! To tell you the truth, I never intended her to be nude for this scene, actually I had never thought about it... I was too concerned with all the camera movements and never thought about what she would actually be wearing. Soon she came marching out with nothing but a pair of shoes on and sat down in the middle of the floor with nothing but a jar of blood covering her privates. I thought this looked so cool that I went ahead and shot the scene just like that - and I still think it is one of the coolest looking shots in the movie. But, if she would of talked to me prior to the movie and complained to me about not wanting to do the scene nude, I know I would of said she didn't have to.

So, miscommunication about scripts can prove problematic for both sides of the fence - actors should take special care in addressing any scenes they don't understand or not clear on what is to actually happen. It's best to iron out these things at the beginning.

DO-IT-YOURSELF PYROTECHNICS



by **Ronnie
Sortor**



The first thing I shot for RAVAGE was a squib test. Special effects man, Frank Alexander showed up at my place one summer day in 1995, anxious to demonstrate the new squib design he had been working on. For our previous movies, SINYSTER, and LIVING A ZOMBIE DREAM, the bullet-wound effects, (done by a different person) were much too explosive. Those black-powder bombs totally obliterated blood packs and costumes. Frank knew of my disappointment and aversion to using them again.

We set up lights and the camera as he rigged the squib onto a dummy. Frank laughed as I held my hands over my ears. (The old squibs wreaked havoc on eardrums, as well.) "Relax, these aren't that loud," Frank said, trying to reassure me. We rolled and he popped it. A silver-dollar size hole burst through the T-shirt and the blood poured out appropriately. Yes!

What a rush! If there's a more rewarding experience than seeing effects accomplished on the set, for me, it's seeing it on the screen. In other words, for instance, on the SINYSTER set when the squibs blew, blood spray speckled everyone in sight. The former fx guys would say, "Yeah! That really worked, huh? There's blood all over everything!" Well, yes and no. The blood's there but it's atomized! The camera can't SEE it!

Here's how the new squibs

work: First of all, gas up the car, 'cause the ingredients have to be gathered from all over town. First stop, the hardware store. In the plumbing section, get nylon end caps for a 1/2" pipe. This will be the base and housing for each squib. End caps are shaped like a very short bolt with a hexagonal head. The threaded area is hollow. This little reservoir will contain the explosive.

Now truck over to the hobby shop and buy all of their model rocket igniters. They come in packs of three for a couple of bucks each. The manager will ask what the hell you plan to use them for when you tell him that you've just depleted his stock and that he needs to order more. (You'll need them.) Don't lie. You're making a movie! He just wants to be assured that you're not gonna blow up city hall.

Next stop, discount center. You know, Wal-Mart or K-Mart. Here's where you get candles, cheap speaker wire, self-adhesive cork discs, and a 9-volt battery. Lastly, go to the magic/costume shop. Buy a pack of flash cotton. It's expensive; about \$30 for a small package, but it should last for 50 or more squibs. (While you're there, get some sparkling powder for blanks.) Hope your town has a good magic shop, 'cause I have no idea where else to get this stuff. You've seen flash pa-

per? Flash cotton does the same thing. I must state that Borderline Entertainment assumes no responsibility for accidents involving anyone dumb enough to handle this stuff carelessly. It's extremely flammable!



ASSEMBLY:



Place a small tuft of flash cotton (about the same amount as what you could pull off both ends of a Q-tip) in the bottom of the cap. Cut a pinhole in the center of the cork disc and carefully insert the filament end of the igniter through it. This filament is very delicate. When squibs don't work, it's usually because the igniter broke during assembly. The disc/igniter is then placed so that the filament touches the flash cotton. The disc forms a lid over it. Press the disc into the reservoir so that it fits snugly. This is the tricky part and will require practice, so plan on wasting a few. If it's too tight, lack of air between the fibers will prevent ig-

nition, and if it's too loose, it'll flame out. What you're doing, essentially is turning a flammable substance into a small explosive substance with the compression in the cap. But, there's no way to gauge the right amount of pressure.



With the disc in place, light a standard wax candle—unscented; oils in scented candles will defeat your purpose—and drip wax into the reservoir until it's full. Let it cool, then carefully attach a standard speaker wire. Now, your squib is ready for hacking and blood. Stretch the blood filled condom over the round squib area as tightly as possible and secure with duct tape. (Frank found some red duct tape, recently. Cool!)

The squib is like a miniature gun. The cap is the barrel; the hardened wax is the projectile. The explosive pop forces the wax bullet through the blood

and costume, but it's weak enough to be relatively safe. The wires usually prevent the wax from shooting out very far, anyway. One time, however, a wax projectile escaped the squib when it blew and hit my hand. Ouch! It left a neat bruise, but this was the only casualty of RAVAGE.

The last step is to pre-score the costume. Actually, I cut an X right into the fabric about two inches in diameter. Use spray adhesive to stick the squib onto the costume and secure with duct tape. (The most important piece of

the flame is visible. The result is a cool jump-cut. I do a lot of jump-cutting in my movies, anyway. It's just another part of my style!

One advantage to making my movies here in the midwest is in that lots of people have gun collections. It's never been a problem to have enough weapons for our projects. We only use the real ones when the scene requires them to be loaded or fired. When guns are just being carried, pointed to, or dropped, plastic replicas are used. None of our 9mm handguns have been "con-



equipment, besides lights and cameras, is indeed duct tape.) With the costume on the actors you will need adjust the little flaps of fabric over the squib. Just lightly spray a bit more adhesive and stick it in place. If the costume is white, you can stick some tissue paper over it to hide it further.



Grab your battery and you're ready for action!

Several times, the squibs in RAVAGE flamed. During editing, I cut those two or three frames where

verted," so we can only fire one shot at a time. If I want multiple shots fired, I make sure that character is using a revolver. For one shot in SINISTER, I had the actor shoot real bullets from his 9mm into a tree, because I wanted those multiple shots. But real bullets don't emit the sparks and flame that we like to see, so that shot might as well have been from one of Bookwalter's movies.

Our blanks are made from real bullets. Frank got lucky at one gun shop when the owner gave him some boxes of defective

The squib is like a miniature gun. The cap is the barrel, the hardened steel is the projectile. The explosive pop forces the wax bullet through the blood and clothing, but it's weak enough to be relatively safe.

shells. They couldn't be used "live" because they were cracked where the slug was connected. We pull the slugs out for blanks, of course, anyway!

Simply remove the lead slug with vise-grips and dump out the powder and wadding. Stick a small piece of flash cotton or flash paper into the shell and add a dash of sparking powder. You may need to crimp the end of the shell to get it to load properly. These blanks will shoot out three or four feet worth of spark and flame.

Some of the gunshots were done with sparking squibs when we ran out of blanks. They were wired onto the end of a plastic gun and pointed at an angle away from the camera. There is one shot in *RAVAGE* of a police radio blowing up from a gunshot. Instead of destroying an expensive prop, we squibbed a small cardboard box with a cutout photo of a scanner radio from a Radio Shack catalog!

At the beginning of *RAVAGE*, there's an impressive bullet-hit effect that shatters the rear-window of a car. Automotive safety-glass is some strong stuff. What we had to do, was throw a sledge hammer through it from inside! Some crew-members said it would be obvious. "We could SEE it!", referring to the sledge hammer. Yeah, but the CAMERA doesn't see it! All you need is some ingenuity and you can perform all kinds of cinematic slight-of-hand.



by Ron Bonk

Editing. The assembling of your finished movie. Possibly the most exciting part of movie-making, because you take everything you've shot and form it into a complete, hopefully sensible, story. And if you can't do that easily then you figure out ways around it. It's the magic of editing - it can't necessarily make a bad production good, but with enough hard work, it can make a bad production watchable.

WHAT A DEAL! and **CITY OF THE VAMPPIRES** I can lump together, because they were shot and edited pretty much the same way, in the summers of 1992 and 1993 respectively. I used the JVC 707U SVHS camera after investigating around a bit. I liked this camera because of the quality of the colors, and also the ability to override all the functions - white balance (actually had three presets as well, which made it very handy), f-stop, AGC, manual zoom and focus. Plus it would hold all these settings even in standby mode (The Panasonic AG455, in contrast, won't hold the white balance, and doesn't have manual zoom, but the picture quality is top notch). I would set the camera to automatic, let it get a reading in the room, then lock down the iris. I would then stop it down a stop or two, which would cut down on hot spots



(overblown areas of light). Once the projects were ready, I would edit them together between the JVC camera or a Panasonic AG455 and a Panasonic AG-1950 SVHS VCR. I had the AG-A95 edit controller from Panasonic as well, but it can not shuttle back frame by frame with the Panasonic camera (and doesn't even work with the JVC), which became very annoying. So I dispensed with the controller, and went manually between the two decks. This would involve me finding a cue point on the raw footage, counting down in my head until I hit "2", then kicking the record deck into motion, and hoping for as tight a cut as possible. Since this method was so inaccurate, especially when it came to very tight, quick edits, it would end up taking several tries. I had to repeat some cuts so many times that it glitched the original raw footage! Needless to say, it was very tedious and nerve wracking, but eventually I got the project done as best I possible could.

As I edited, I ran the whole thing through a Video Toaster 2000 and the Personal TBC III on a Commodore Amiga 20. To show you how naive I was at the time, I thought that I would need the TBC in the Amiga to keep the signal steady from s-deck to s-deck. I had simply gone off the word of the salesperson (silly me!) So I edited both these projects

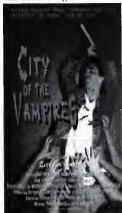
through the Toaster, when it wasn't necessary, and degraded the picture quality that much more (when editing, the less items you run the source material through before it reaches the record deck, the better). After that was all done, I then ran a new master copy off my ultimate master copy, and sent that off to be filmlooked. From that new filmlooked master, I then made four new masters for duplication. So right away, the video was already down like 5 or 6 generations. It ended up resembling low-end super-8 film (if there is such a thing...).

WHAT A DEAL! was never filmlooked, and I just made four masters of the original master, so the image stayed pretty sharp.

I was back in production in late summer of 1994 with **PERMANENT WAVES**, the first segment of an anthology (at the time, called **DARK SHOW**) I was planning to shoot over the next year. Each segment was going to be experimental for me in some way - one was straight forward in concept, but crazier in the shot and sound selection; another would be b-w on film; another was going to be completely from the camera's pov (an idea that latter evolved into **STRAWBERRY ESTATES**); and a last segment would involve one actor in one location and no dialogue and trying to

make the story as interesting as possible by using the camera to explain what was going on. I started with the easiest of the segments - a straight forward horror story, shot selection inspired by the ideas Raimi had set forth in *THE EVIL DEAD*. The reason for this was simple: on *CITY*, due to all sorts of extenuating circumstances, I felt like I didn't get anywhere near my original vision for the story. If I looked at that movie as an outsider, I wouldn't see anything that would wow me, or I would want to try and duplicate in a future production. It didn't inspire anything in me. As the production on that one fell apart, I quickly cut down on the more difficult shots and made it plane, simple and quick. In other words, boring! There are few moving shots, no odd angles high or low, no elaborate light setups. So I felt like I had not even remotely come close to reaching my original vision for the story, and I had to see if I could do that under simpler circumstances. See, I argued with myself internally that it was the outside problems that lead to the disaster known as *CITY OF THE VAMPIRES*, and not because I lacked any sort of vision or talent for filmmaking. I felt I could really make an important, well-done movie, and *CITY* made it look like I could barely find the record button on the camcorder! Now, if I put myself in a secure locations, without worry of outside interference, with actors that were totally dedicated and not just out for the money, and I still made a bad movie, then it was time to get out of the business and start working my way up the McDonald's corporate ladder. But if I came close, if I improved on my mistakes (it was okay if I made new ones, just not the same ones), if I proved to myself I had a vision and it wasn't completely my fault *CITY* sucked the big one, then I would

continue to pursue this idea that I could be a filmmaker. The segment could still be crap, and I had told myself, promised myself, that I would never release another piece of crap again (I only did so with *CITY* to complete the circle - I learned production with that movie, hands on, and it also gave me something to learn about the distribution end as well), but as long as it showed definite improvement, and it did, I would continue to trudge forward.



The JVC was off for repairs, so I decide to shoot with the Panasonic. It was simple shoot involving four actors, one house, and a heavy handed story line about a woman trying to escape the specter of her dead, abusive husband. In it, I went more for the terror than the horror. I kept trying to think of different ways to carry out the suspense, to let things build. But I also experimented with different ways to shock the audience. I needed to get comfortable with the camera and where I was going to place it. I needed to use it to tell the

story, with little dialogue. If I could explain what was happening by showing it rather than having someone sitting there telling the viewer, then I would always take that route. It was shot in one month's time, and overall I was pleased with it. It was a definite improvement over *CITY* (one of my current partners can't believe I haven't released it - he likes it that much!). But at the time, because of elaborate special sound effects needed, I wasn't able to complete it. Besides all that, I had received a call to go out and DP *THE SANDMAN* in Ohio, and I would just barely have enough time to finish shooting and rough edit the movie before heading that way. My quick cut (in a week's time, believe it or not!), between the camera and deck again, brought it in at 65 minutes, and I considered releasing it as a feature. But there were some serious chunks of it that didn't work, and I felt the short routine was the way to go. My plans for the anthology were temporarily shelved, but I knew I would get back to it someday.

After strictly working on the production of *THE SANDMAN*, I produce another short called *I'VE KILLED BEFORE*. It was again shot with JVC 707U (as was *THE SANDMAN*), and was a PULP FICTION-esque story of a woman who tracks down a serial killer to learn his evil ways. It was intended as a show reel to present to potential investors for raising funds for larger projects we were planning. With *I'VE KILLED*, I got my first taste of editing nonlinear, and I was instantly spoiled. I would never go back! I edited on ADOBE PREMIERE on an associate's Mac computer. With Premiere, I could cut exactly to the frame I wanted, with no slip-page. After we experimented around with different ways of inputting the video to and outputting the video from the com-

puter, I learned that if you brought the video signal in at screen, with a very low compression, then outputted it at full screen, that you had a very realistic 16mm filmlook. The only problem was that if segments got too long, it would drop an occasional frame here or there, resulting in a jittered picture from time to time. So I cut it together on the computer, going into this software blind (lucky for me, I had worked an internship a couple summers early where they had used a similar program - only their software ran like \$75,000), and offed each segment to s-vhs. I took it online then, and had an editor cut it all together to Betacam. An associate did a rather quick sound mix, sending it back on the left hi-fi channel of a vhs tape (Though appreciative of his efforts, I was displeased with this mix and am redoing for the new release). I was then supposed to have this sound mix transferred back to the betacam tape, but I couldn't find a place that could do it (to transfer it back from just one of the hi-fi channels was a strange request for most of these places.2). It had come out well, and I used it to help secure actors and crew on my next project.

Late that summer of 1995, I headed back to Syracuse, New York to establish my business and start work on a new movie. Keep in mind that so far, all I was known for was CITY, and all I was known as was a really bad director. I had a lot of work ahead of me, but had learned a lot over the past couple years, and knew what I wanted and didn't want to do. So I set about establishing contacts in my area to help me make my movies. Immediately, my main two partners today came along - Jerry O'Sullivan (the master madman behind the upcoming horror romp GUT-PIL3) and Jeff Forsyth (now in pre-produc-

tion on DEEP FIRE). They too shared my love for movie-making and dreamed of making their own movies. I sent them CITY, I'VE KILLED BEFORE, THE SANDMAN, and they were impressed - shot on video movies, packaged in a nice slick box, shrink wrapped, the whole 9 yards. If I could get their support, if they would help me take my real first serious shot at making a God's honest movie, then I would return the favor regardless of the results. And these guys proved totally dedicated, with knowledge



Producer Jerry O'Sullivan watches a shot with director Ron Bush discusses a shot with Sasha Graham on THE VICIOUS SWEET

in production work, with connection for fellow crew, actors, locations. I couldn't have asked for two better partners.

So, we teamed up and set about to make THE VICIOUS SWEET, the movie that I would hope would establish me as someone to keep an eye on in the indie scene (When I make LITTLE SISTER, my vampire epic, that will hopefully wash the bad taste of CITY out of every vampire lover's mouth).

VSWT (for short) was shot on the JVC camera, and edited on a IBM computer (Pentium, 133mhz,

32 MB RAM), with 6 gigs of space (I am using a Q-Motion PCI board, but it is not the best, so if you decide you want Premiere, call Adobe and ask them what cards they recommend. Call these places and see if they have any deals on their card coming bundled with Premiere and possibly Adobe Photoshop - which allows for digital effects on the video segments). I could upload to the computer about 45 min worth of footage at a time (almost all of it at full-screen, since I preferred to maintain the highest quality coming off the computer as possible, forgoing the my filmlook process which grained the picture a little too much for my tastes), which I would cut down into segments 1 to 5 minutes long. This cut down on the frame skipping when I eventually offed the footage (the longer the cut, the better the chance the computer would have more difficulty processing it). To keep the computer freed up for space, I would off this finished segments to an Iomega Ditto 3200 backup tape drive. After about three months of editing, I had the movie cut as far as I could take it with my system, so I rented a Betacam SP deck (ran me \$900), and pulled all the footage off in one long weekend.

The Betacam tapes were then shipped off to fellow-filmmaker and good friend Kevin Lindenmuth (ADDICTED TO MURDER, THE ALIEN AGENDA), who tagged all the segments together with his frame accurate equipment. Overall, it helped me to hold onto the best possible quality from the s-vhs master tapes, and it certainly is one of the sharpest looking s-vhs movies ever made. With the added filmlooking process from Kevin's system, most swear it is 16mm film. And though I hate to have to market this movie as anything but a shot-on-video epic (I'm try-

ing to help bring the format some respectability), it will help to land more distributors who thumb their noses at any project, regardless of professionalism, made in this format.

In between everything else, we also shot a short movie called LESS OF TWO EVILS for the LOOKING FOR RICHARD nationwide contest (We were one of five finalist for it as well, with Al Pacino being the final judge - but no, we didn't win - but Pacino saw our work!). I didn't find out about the contest until December, with the deadline being at the end of the month, so in two weeks I wrote the screenplay, re-wrote it three more times, and with the help of my usual movie partners, as well as relative newcomers Ed Mastin and CJ Young, we cast and secured our locations for this mini-epic. We shipped Sasha back out here to Syracuse, and over one weekend shot the entire 11 min story (I also figured that if I was hauling Sasha back out here from NYC, then I would reshoot a couple scenes I was very unhappy with lighting wise in VSWEET). I edited it together in a week, bringing it on to the computer at screen for my patented, cheap, decent looking, immediate filmlooking. But because it was a 11 minutes long, and it would skip frames before playing the whole short, and I wouldn't have time to go online (especially since almost every on-line editing house in my area was closed between Dec. 24th and Jan 1st), I had to off the segment at 15 frames per second. That way, if there was any skipping in the frames, it would be totally unnoticeable. I didn't like this look, since it was almost like a strobe, but most people seemed to think it looked

pretty good, and fellow filmmaker Steve Ballot (THE BRIDE OF FRANK) said it was the most realistic filmlooking he had ever seen. I managed to finish everything and over-nighted the completed short with about one day to spare. And surprise, surprise, we placed!

We have basically been following the same format for our last two movies - STRAWBERRY ES-

I also have been totally redoing the sound track and layering in a lot of sound effects. In addition, I have Creative Wave Studios, which allows me to manipulate the sound effects, as well as some built in filters in PREMIERE, like "Echo," to manipulate the sound. Overall, it plays much better than it ever would have if I edited it my old way, and it is getting a better sound mix than the newer, far larger VICIOUS SWEET. It might just be my most polished work. But with editing on GUT-PILE, STRAWBERRY ESTATES, and then the director's cut of KILLING SPREE, the stuff I'm doing in WAVES will seem like mere child's play!

And that pretty much takes you up to date. We hope to move on to digital production and editing in the short future. Having a digital camera and editing with your computer would be ideal - you don't have to download the footage on to the computer because the camera works like an external hard drive. Just create and EDL (Edit Decision List), and the computer cuts it all together in one shot, reoffing it back to your tape on the camera!

Watch for our future productions over the next year: THE WORLD VS SONNY AND GINO, LITTLE SISTER, DEEP FIRE, SPOOK HOUSE, KILLING SPREE 2 and I AM VENGEANCE!

All the movies mentioned above (except CITY OF THE VAMPIRES - which is on permanent moratorium) are available or will be available through Salt City Home Video at 315-452-9702, b-movie@ix.netcom.com, www.b-movie.com, or P.O. Box 5515, Syracuse, NY 13220, or even Dracula publishing. Visa or mastercard accepted.



TATES, starring Debbie Rochon (ABDUCTED 2, TROMEO AND JULET) and Tina Krause (PSYCHO SISTERS) and GUT-PILE. I have also been re-editing PERMANENT WAVES to be included in the DARK DESCENT anthology with IVE KILLED BEFORE. Editing on Premiere allows me 99 superimposition tracks (for special effects) and 99 audio tracks. It has not only allowed me to beef the segment up with some neat digital work (ran into Photoshop as a filmstrip file, then worked on frame by frame), but



THE LINDENMUTH AGENDA

By Franklin E. Wales

Photos courtesy of Brimstone Productions

Kevin Lindenmuth has become, perhaps, the most unifying force in the independent movies today. In a business that seems to treat back stabbing one's peers as a virtue, Kevin has managed to write a book and release a three tape sci-fi anthology, all through collaboration with other filmmakers. Proving, once again, there is no room for a pompous attitude in this business.

"Nobody I deal with has an ego," says Lindenmuth. "That lends itself to collaborating. When you aren't full of yourself. We all know what it takes and know how likely you are to get screwed. You screw around with people and that comes back to you, people won't want to work with you. I think everybody involved has a real zero bullshit tolerance. Anything done for under a hundred thousand dollars is viewed by distributors as the same thing. We're all in the same boat. You might as well make it easier instead of all the fighting."

With just two features to his credit, (VAMPIRES AND OTHER STEREOTYPES/94, ADDICTED TO MURDER/95) Kevin began networking early on. "What I'll do is I'll hear of a movie that I've never seen and I'll write the filmmaker a letter and offer to swap one of

mine for one of theirs. Usually they have no problem with that. We strike up conversation and wind up keeping in touch. That's how I met a lot of filmmakers.

"It's really great when you come upon people who think the same. That's a big part of collaboration. You have to work with somebody who you can trust. A lot of these people I've never met in person, but I've talked to them on the phone for years. That's a big part of it—Knowing you can trust somebody—Having seen what they can do."

Kevin's book (ADDICTED TO FILMMAKING: INTERVIEWS WITH INDEPENDENT DIRECTORS/McFarland & Co.) was his first attempt at working with other filmmakers. "At conventions a lot of people come up and ask questions, and I get letters with the same questions. Answering the same questions over and over again. I figured there must be a need for a book. I'd read all those other books on independent filmmaking, and they never quite rang true. They tell you ideally how to go about something, without going into how to get equipment, or how to get your hands on things.

Rather than just cover his point of view, Kevin sent his list of questions to other filmmakers who's work he respected. "There's two dozen people involved other than myself. You have that many people answering the same question and all coming up with similar answers, you say, 'Heck, this must be the way to do it, because all these people said the same thing'."

From there it was a natural transaction to produce a movie together. "They all expressed interest in working on something when we would talk on the phone. That was something that was in the back of my mind. I was thinking of a new project to do, but doing a whole feature will occupy over a year of your time." But, what if he had other filmmakers shoot segments and incorporated them into one whole? That way a movie could have nationwide locations, and no one would ever have to leave home. He pitched the idea to the people who had responded to his book.

"Because it was a short, it wouldn't cost them as much as a feature. They didn't have to worry about boxes, I took care of all that. My agreement was that they



Arthur Lundquist in ALIEN AGENDA: UNDER THE SKIN

would get a percentage, but I have to make my cost on boxes and publicity." It seemed ideal. "The point is to make the money back as quickly as possible, so that you're not losing anything. It's less of a risk. You aren't spreading yourself too thin, as these things don't take a lot of time. The quality is there because the filmmakers all know what they're doing."

The end result of this project came to be known as THE ALIEN AGENDA, a three volume set tied loosely together by a similar theme, yet flexible enough to allow viewing of the tapes in any order. Rather than rehash the same story over again, Kevin chose to formulate each volume differently than the others. The first tape released, OUT OF THE DARKNESS is very much a dialogue driven drama, while the second ENDANGERED SPECIES, is action adventure in theme. The third, UNDER THE SKIN, is a comedy action picture. Each tape features some of the best names in the independent world.

The success of the now completed ALIEN AGENDA series has given Kevin the inspiration to continue in an even greater way. "It's not going to be an anthology but two unconnected short stories back to back under the title of CREATUREALM. I came up with this idea, and liked it a lot, because there were a couple of shorts I wanted to do. They're relatively easy to do. You only need a couple of weekends to shoot it."

Though still in it's planning stage, the project is already creating excitement in the field. A few of the names who have expressed interest include Hugh (GOROTICA) Gallagher, Eric (SAVAGE HARVEST) Stanze, Tim (SCREAMING FOR SANITY) Ritter, Gabi (SHADOWDANCE) Campisi, and Ron (ALIEN FORCE) Ford.

The key, Kevin insists, is building a network of like minds. "Networking is how all this came about. It helps if you have something to show them. I think that

one reason it came together so well for me, is that everybody knew me from magazines and the movies. That helped. Somebody who's never made a movie would find it a lot harder.

"You should begin with people who live in your area. If you're just starting off you need to have a crew that you can depend on. You have to have that down first. The test is to be able to do your own movie before you try to do



Sasha Graham, Kevin Lindenmuth and Rach Pelt from THE ALIEN AGENDA OUT OF THE DARKNESS.

one with somebody else"

Once you've gotten some experience, conventions are a great place to meet like minded people. The cost may seem high, but the contacts you'll make can be priceless. With everyone from industry names to independent distributors in attendance, the question you need to ask is not if you can afford to go, but if you can afford not to.

Kevin has also found that the mail is a great way to hook up with other filmmakers. "If you find someone that you may want to work with, write them a letter and send them your tape. Here's who I am, this is what I've done, do you want to work on some-

thing together?" Send-the-tape. You're going to spend a buck fifty to send them information anyway, it'll only cost you a couple more to send the tape along. It isn't like you're going to do it twenty times, you're going to do it a couple of times."

Should you desire to attempt such a vast project, the weight of responsibility lies upon you. It is best to get the groundwork laid before contacting anyone else.

"You have to be very clear and up front with what you want to do. Have it all in writing. That way there's no confusion," says Kevin. "If you're the one pulling all this together, you can't sound doubtful. And, you have to be able to handle all that without stepping on somebody's toes. You have to be somewhat diplomatic. You can't say 'Oh this stuff sucks'."

Make no mistake, there is a lot of work involved. But the end results, when done properly, benefit everyone. Fans get more than one filmmaker per feature, and movie makers, of course gain exposure to fans other than their own.

Perhaps you're not interested in something this large scale, but you could use a little help with your movie in some other areas. "At this point," Kevin points out, "it's not really even about money. It's finding somebody else who likes to do what you like to do, then swapping resources and bartering. Filmlooking for effects, stuff like that."

Regardless of which way you go, Kevin warns against getting discouraged. The time factor, he says, will always be there. "Everyone has a full time job. Things happen that are beyond your control, and that pushes things back. It's taken 14 months to do three (ALIEN AGENDA) features. I wanted to do them all in three months."

"You just really have to keep with it."

For further info on the works of Kevin Lindenmuth, contact:
BRIMSTONE PRODUCTIONS
3W 102nd St, Suite #4B
New York, NY 10025

MARKETING YOUR FILM FOR A DISTRIBUTOR

-OR-

HOW TO MAKE YOUR FILM "TO DIE FOR"

by Bill Cunningham

You've spent your life savings producing the epic film "BLOOD BABES FROM BABYLON" and now you're ready to begin the arduous task of getting a distributor interested in your film. Interested enough to distribute it. Guess what? You lose! The time to start marketing your film to a possible distributor is long before you've finished it. Otherwise all the blood, sweat, and lies will have been for nothing.

Now you're probably saying to yourself, "But isn't marketing the picture the DISTRIBUTOR'S job?" Well, yes and no. What you must realize as a filmmaker and producer is that it's the distributor's job to market the film to the AUDIENCE, but it's your job to get the distributor interested enough in your picture to commit the resources of his company to market your film. You sell him on your picture and he'll sell everyone else.

So you've got to sell your picture to the distributor. But how do you do that? The following article is a straight forward step-by-step overview of the marketing and promotions process. It is intended to give you ideas on how YOU can get your film promoted, sold and distributed and hopefully reap some benefit from the whole process. It's a tough business out there and it takes a savvy business person to navigate the whole deal.

In trying to sell your picture to a distributor you must remember the three things that are going through a distributor's mind as he is looking at your film:

1. IS IT PROFESSIONAL? Does the picture move along at a good pace? Are all the shots in focus? (You laugh at that but you should see the stuff that crosses my desk!) Is there a good sound mix? Is it shot on film or video? What gauge of film (16 or 35mm)?

2. IS THERE AN AUDIENCE OUT THERE FOR THIS PIC-

What you must realize as a filmmaker and producer is that it's the distributor's job to market the film to the AUDIENCE, but it's your job to get the distributor interested enough in your picture to commit the resources of his company to market your film.

TURE? If your film is only going to appeal to a Lithuanian Goat Herder then chances are the distributor will pass. What genre of picture is it? Will it appeal to a broad range of people? What's going to be hot in a year? That's how far you have to think ahead sometimes (or even further).

3. CAN MY COMPANY MAKE MONEY WITH THIS PICTURE?

A distributor invests a lot of time and money and resources in order to make a buck. Are there enough promotable elements here in this film that will justify

the cost? Are all of the rights available?

Remember these three things and you should have little trouble finding the right distributor for your film. Now how to do it!

IN THE BEGINNING

As mentioned earlier, the time to begin marketing your film is the same day you start pre-production. The first time you decide to make your picture and have some of the elements lined up - script, director, producers, financing - then go down to the local newsstand and pick up a copy of THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER. In it you will find listings for films that are in pre-production, production, and postproduction. Call them up or fax and put an ad in. List the title, genre and production office address (your place or a PO Box). You will be amazed at the amount of free stuff that will come your way.

So you're saying, "Why do I have to go through the hassle?" Is it a hassle to get discounts on equipment? Actor's resume's? Crew resume's? Product placement services? Tommy Faircloth, director of the independent horror comedy CRINO-LINE HEAD thought so. Through a small ad in HR he was able to get a discount on filmstock and services and arranged with a small independent record label for music in his movie's soundtrack. All for free! Tommy was able to generate the first word-of-mouth on his picture even before a single

frame was shot.

Besides the fact you get all of the wonderful freebies in the mail, the ad in HR gives your production an "air of legitimacy" that you can use to further promote your efforts to get your film to a distributor. You can show the ad to locals who may donate time and services to your production. More fuel for the promotion!

At this point it is advisable to get yourself a PUBLICIST (you notice I didn't say "hire"). They are the person responsible for the promotion and publicity for your picture. They generate the "buzz" that gets distributors coming to you instead of you having to hunt them down. But where to find one? (that will work for free).

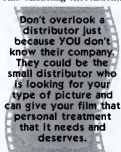
Go to your local college or university and check out the journalism department. Introduce yourself and be up front about what you want. You need someone who will work on your picture as the publicist for free. Arrange (if you can) with the department an internship for this person so that they get all the school credit they deserve. That way, the person you pick will do a good job for you or their grade suffers. In many cases the publicist/intern can access school facilities - computers, photo developing darkrooms, etc. - which will help out tremendously in keeping the promotions cost down. It also makes your correspondence and whatnot look very professional.

Work with your publicist on press releases, promotions, and dealing with the public for you. The best publicists I've found are those that refuse to take "no" for an answer. A good publicist generates an excitement for your picture. They are energetic and enthusiastic even when

they've had the door slammed in their face a hundred times. Choose your publicist carefully.

DURING THE MADNESS OF PRODUCTION -

While you are shooting, your publicist should begin researching and collating the information necessary to sell your picture to a distributor. An excellent resource to have would be a Membership Directory for AFMA (formerly The American Film Marketing Association).



Don't overlook a distributor just because YOU don't know their company. They could be the small distributor who is looking for your type of picture and can give your film that personal treatment that it needs and deserves.

AFMA is the organization of independent film distributors who sell their product (films/TV) to foreign buyers all across the world and here in the US. The directory lists all the members of AFMA and their addresses. You may have heard of some of their members - Concorde, Troma, Curb, Miramax. A lot of them you will not recognize their name. Don't overlook a distributor just because YOU don't know their company. They could be the small distributor who is looking for your type of picture and can give your film that personal treatment that it needs and deserves.

In addition to the AFMA directory, pick up the American Film

Market issues of VARIETY and THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER. They are published in February every year and list all the AFM attendees and what they will be selling. Take a good look. Make note of all the distributors who are selling films that are in the same genre as yours. Does your picture measure up to what they are selling? Is it unique and promotable? If so then fax them a press release addressed to the person in charge of acquisitions.

Give them a four sentence synopsis of the plot and when you expect to be completed. Also list what distribution rights are available - video only, cable and free TV, theatrical or worldwide. Make the fax neat, readable and to the point. You are saying to the distributors, "Hi", and that is all. You are laying the groundwork for bigger things later.

While you are shooting your picture, take the time to shoot some good stills of your production. During rehearsals on set have your photographer shoot both color slides and black and white stills. These are one of your most important selling tools and should not be neglected. Shoot them now because your distributor will need them later.

You may be able to kill two birds with one stone by having the local press shoot your stills for you. That way you can generate local publicity and pictures at the same time. Just remember to get duplicates of the negatives and the slides so that you have the means to generate a good press kit.

While you are having your stills shot on set your publicist should be making arrangements for articles to be written about the stars of your picture. Hopefully, you have one or two "name" actors in your film that are known to the general pub-

lic or your specific audience. The publicist can write the articles himself or have the actors interviewed. Certain members of the crew such as the producer, writer, and director should also be interviewed. Your publicist should have a handle on what kind of movie you're making and placing articles appropriately. For example, on **HELLBLOCK 13**, the new picture from Crimson Productions' Paul Talbot and Jeff Miller, their lead actress Debbie Rochon was interviewed in **THE DARK SIDE**. Debbie was able to promote the picture and the article included several stills of her and co-star Gunnar Hansen (**THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**).

If you are making a horror picture then your article placement choices are kind of obvious. The talented publicist tries to tie in **OTHER AUDIENCES** to your picture in some fashion as well. Filmmaking magazines like **MOVIE MAKER** and **THE INDEPENDENT** may offer other avenues of promotion if the articles are slanted to their interests. Those magazines are widely read in the industry and go a long way in promoting your film to a distributor. The whole point is to throw your promotions net wide and get as diverse a crowd as possible wanting to see your picture.

AND NOW THE WORK REALLY BEGINS -

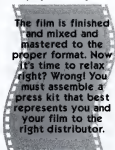
The film is finished and mixed and mastered to the proper format. Now it's time to relax right? Wrong! You must assemble a press kit that best represents you and your film to the right distributor.

Hopefully, all the hard work that your publicist has done will now pay off. A good press kit is easily assembled and is cheap

to produce. The following is a list of things that a good press kit should have:

1. A 1/2" VHS Time-coded window dupe of your final cut. It should include a simple label on it saying the title of the film, running time, and a person to contact if the viewer is interested. Also include an address and phone number. No fancy artwork. No weird type fonts. Just something easy to read.

2. A synopsis of the plot that



The film is finished and mixed and mastered to the proper format. Now it's time to relax right? Wrong! You must assemble a press kit that best represents you and your film to the right distributor.

should run no longer than 2 pages.

3. A cast list with biographical information for each major character.

4. A crew list for the production.

5. Bios on all the major production heads - writer, producer, director, director of photography, art director, etc., anyone who is promotable.

6. A listing of all the festivals the film has appeared in or will appear at (More on that later).

7. Background on the production - how it came about, financ-

ing, where shot, how long, etc.. DO NOT INCLUDE THE FINAL BUDGET IN THE PRESS KIT! Telling a distributor how much you spent (or didn't) on your film gives them a leverage over you when it comes to negotiating a distribution deal.

8. Copies of all the press that you have been able to generate - articles, personal appearances, etc., plus a listing of all the articles that you expect to come out soon.

9. 3 or 4 Black and white stills from the production showing the exciting stuff and tells the story.

10. A nice folder to put it all in. The folder should look nice and not be a "school" type folder. Include your production company's name and address on it somewhere.

11. A cover letter addressed personally to the person in charge of acquisitions for the company you're submitting to. If you don't know their name then call

Now that I've laid out most of the rules, let's show you how to break some of them and maximize your publicity value to show those pesky distributors what kind of "entrepreneurs" they're dealing with. Here are a few suggestions that may or may not work for you depending upon what kind of picture and what kind of audience you're shooting for:

1. Set up a small booth at a convention and promote the hell out of your picture. If you have stars in it get them down there to sign autographs and tell people about the new picture. Actors love to talk about their favorite subject (themselves) so

it shouldn't be hard, especially if you split the profits with them on pictures that they autograph. Sell shirts or any other cheap merchandise that you can come up with to generate money and publicity.

2. Enter your flick into a film festival. Many distribution deals are made over a few drinks after a screening. If you think that your picture is good enough to go to a festival then enter. Enter the ones where you think you have the best shot of doing well. The competition is tough so choose carefully and do good research. Read over the competition rules carefully so that you're not spending a lot of money for just a small amount of publicity value. You don't have to win an award at the festival (RESERVOIR DOGS didn't) but you should try and pack the house with as many people as you can con, cajole, or threaten.

3. If you've made a horror picture and want to get it seen by the horror audience then take it to a convention and screen it there. Do a world premiere. If the audience responds well that will give you the fuel to approach the distributors more forcefully and try to do a deal. Besides that there are often movie pros in the audience who may be able to help out.

4. Before you send your picture to a distributor, send your screeners out to try and get a quote from a magazine or a person associated with the genre. Their quotes can go into the press kit and at the very least tells the distributor that you are on the ball in trying to sell your picture. Remember, if YOU don't sell your picture then no one else will. By getting these pros interested in your picture

then you go a long way towards easing a distributor's sales resistance.

5. If you can afford it, invite distributors to a special screening. Serve drinks and food and most distributors will kill each other to get through the door. We like those free events (with food!). This gives you a chance to meet the distribution reps and for them to get to know you. Try to get the best screening room available without killing your budget.



Hopefully, I've given you enough ideas on getting your film into the right hands. Remember there is no "right" way to do this, but there are many wrong ones. Think professionally and logically and you should do all right. And remember always to GET IT IN WRITING!

DO'S:

1. Do start thinking of your marketing as early as possible.

2. Do your best with what you have. Research everything and don't be afraid to ask questions.

3. Do shoot good stills that "sell"

the picture to your audience.

4. Do be creative (while still playing within the rules).

5. Do get as many articles in as many different magazines and papers as possible.

DON'T:

1. Don't sit on your ass and expect the distributor to come to you. I'm too busy to look for work.

2. Don't use artwork that looks amateurish. Same goes for "weird" typefaces, etc. If I can't read it clearly, I'm going to toss it away.

3. Don't forget to proofread your work.

4. Don't tell me you "really need to sell this picture to pay back your student loans because you dropped out to make this film". That doesn't make me weep one bit.

5. Don't send out "works in progress". They look bad and make a bad first impression about you.

6. Don't forget to keep me updated on your progress even if I pass on the first go-round. If you get some awards, I may just change my mind!

Bill Cunningham is based in Los Angeles where he works for a film distribution company. Bill is intimately familiar with low - budget production as he worked on both HELLBLOCK 13 and FREAKSHOW. He is currently writing a screenplay which he intends to produce later next year - He may be contacted by writing to SCAN.



TIM RITTER on PACKAGING, PROMOTION and DISTRIBUTION

**interview
by EDGAR O'NEIL**

After months of living with the headaches, heartaches and financial burdens, your movie is finally finished. This is where the creative process of movie making meets the business side: Packaging, Promotion, and Distribution.

Nobody realizes the importance of these three final steps more than director Tim Ritter. Thirteen years ago Ritter sold his first feature, *DAY OF THE REAPER*, out of the trunk of his car. In '95 his sixth feature, *CREEP*, sold a thousand copies straight out of the gate. Even now, while still in post production, his next release, *SCREAMING FOR SANITY* (Oct. '97), is selling advanced orders. He insists it's not that hard to accomplish, once you learn the guidelines.

"Probably the most important thing about making movies," he says "is marketing. You can make the greatest movie in the world, but if you have a lousy ad campaign, nobody's going to see it."

According to Ritter, promotion begins long before your box is created, and continues long after distribution has begun. "I definitely recommend you send advanced screeners around to different magazines before you make your box. Get some good quotes. If you're not a name director, or have a name actor in your movie, it's always good if you can get a few quotes to put on the front. The higher the source, the more someone might pay attention. But, be sure you've marked the tape as a 'Screening Copy', or use a time code burned into one of the masters."

Now you're ready to begin thinking about packaging. Clamshell, or

cardboard box? It depends. "The plastic clamshell is more of a collectors item," says Ritter, "though your financial risk is less. With a computer and a few photos you can put together a really nice typeset cover with full color pictures. You can spend \$250.00 or less for hundreds of covers. And, you won't have to wallpaper your house with the empty boxes if it doesn't sell."

"The disadvantage is that video stores, for the most part, don't like the clamshell. It's pretty much for direct mail. If you're going to try and sell to a chain, you need to go with the cardboard box."

"It all depends on how much you believe in your movie. If you believe your movie is compatible in the wider market place of B-titles, by all means go for the box. (An average run costs about \$1,500. for close to 3,000 boxes.) If you're unsure, or want to generate money to make those boxes, the clamshell and direct sales is a good way to start out. It's also a great way to test market your movie. You sell fifty or sixty copies at thirty dollars apiece, and you'll have money in the bank to spend the bigger bucks for wider distribution."

The easiest and cheapest way to go about distribution is, of course, to start small. "Go to your local video store where you rent movies. Show the owners your box, and ask where they buy their movies from. They get magazines in the mail, and they have tons of contacts from people who sell B-titles. Get the numbers and pitch your product to those people. It can lead to a national deal, depending on the size of the company.

"The best way, is to get the current list of distributor networks is to contact Brimstone Productions for their Distribution Handbook (Brimstone Productions 3W 102nd St., Suite #4B NYC, NY10025). It has twenty or thirty listings of wholesalers across the country along with their addresses and phone numbers. It took me years to acquire what is in there, and they update it every six months. It's definitely the best way to go."

Either way you'll need to send along a press kit consisting of a copy of your box, a three or four minute trailer if you wish, copies of all your good reviews, and a brief cover letter explaining yourself, and your movie. Interested distributors are going to request a screening copy, or a trailer, so be prepared. Again, never send your complete movie unless you've marked the tape as a "Screening Copy".

Even then, Ritter says, "It's very slow. I would say it takes six months to get your tape started. A lot of these distributors don't get back to you. They're overwhelmed with tapes. Keep good notes when you mailed it out, phone number and contact name. Wait a couple weeks and touch base with them to see if they got the package. You can be too much of a pain in the neck, but once a week call and check. Eventually they'll get sick of you calling and watch your tape. It takes that kind of persistence. But it is a fine line between persistence and pain."

You still need to be careful. "With most reputable companies you mail them your tapes COD and they give the UPS man your check. I once

had a distributor that was very reputable, who had been buying from me for a few years without a problem. Then one day they ordered a phenomenal amount of tapes, and I didn't see it coming. All the checks that we got back from them were on accounts that were closed. They had the tapes, and we had nothing. When a company starts to order more than a hundred copies a week, you'd better halt everything and make sure you're getting either cash or a cashier's check."

And never sign an exclusive contract. "You do run into that. I have never signed one of those, though I have been offered many times. The contracts hardly ever stipulate how many copies they are going to sell, or they never reach the goals they promise. When Paramount distributes a movie, they do not enter into any exclusive with any wholesalers. They offer the movie across the board to everybody. It's free enterprise. I would never sign exclusively. It's like dealing directly with the middle man, and if a great deal comes up, you can't handle it yourself, you've got to hand it over."

to them."

All this is good to help get your name out, but Ritter insists that you never stop selling your own movie. "You're doing this to pave your own future. There are very few distributors out there who will take your movie and promote it properly. They are not going to give it the attention and push that you would. These distributors will push your title for a month, but if it doesn't go well, you're going to get lost in the shuffle. They're going to have their next movie."

You might consider taking an ad in a national magazine for direct sales. Do they work? "They have for us. I have met other filmmakers who've gotten zero response from ads. You definitely have to show a picture of your box with your ad or it's worthless. In today's competitive market you're aiming for a niche audience. What can you offer the fans to get them to plunk down twenty or thirty dollars for your tape? With *Wicked Games* we took an ad that said 'Collectors Edition Poster Art by Chas. Balum'. I think that helped, too. (It worked so well, in fact, that SCREAMING

FOR SANITY, will feature more art from Chas.) An eight hundred dollar ad more than doubled our money."

The actors and actresses have all gone back to their day jobs, as has the FX guys. The soundtrack composer is back to writing music for his band. For them, the movie is over. For you, there's still plenty of work to be done. It seems like a lot after the movie itself is done, and everyone else is back to normal life. But, it could mean the difference between hundreds or thousands to you. Besides, there are other benefits to professionalism than just the money. As Ritter points out, "Ideally you make these things for the fans to see. It's very gratifying to know you're actually getting the movie out to the stores. When you make a sale to a video chain, you know the movie's being rented out. You know it's being seen and it's not just collecting dust on your shelf."

For further info on SCREAMING FOR SANITY, or any of Ritter's other movies contact TWISTED ILLUSIONS, P.O. Box 4476 Tequesta, FL 33469



EVER HEAR OF DREAMWORKS? WELL, HOW ABOUT THE B-MOVIE EQUIVALENT ON A DISTRIBUTION LEVEL?! THAT'S WHAT WE GOT HERE WITH DRACULINA DISTRIBUTION/B-MOVIE CENTRAL!

RON BONK and HUGH GALLAGHER speak out on a NEW IDEA in DISTRIBUTION!

RON BONK: Hugh had talked about picking up movies, and I had mentioned this idea I had to him called B-Movie Central. By combining forces, I felt that I could start to incorporate a few of the ideas I had for B-Movie Central, and sort of test it by working closer with him. A move like this benefits both myself and Hugh, being filmmakers, but hopefully other filmmakers as well. Instead of one distributor, they are getting two. How many movies ever get that? Hugh and I basically deal with whole different areas too, so you really are getting twice the work and twice the exposure. Hugh has Draculina, his catalog sales, and catalog sales with others. I deal more with the subs and the video stores, as well as selling foreign territories. Combining like this really is a good step in the right direction for creating a strong b-movie distribution company, especially for these ultra low-budget movies, because good representation has been so hard to find. But because we can basically double the numbers for anyone who's movie we distribute now, it also might allow us to pick up some larger movies. Before, if a movie maker came to me with a movie he had invested \$100,000 in, I would try to steer him in the right direction. I would tell him honestly that my company was not the way to go, because I could not safely guarantee him that he could make that money back. To me, picking up a movie that expensive would be ripping the movie maker off. The average movie at our level moves 1000 to 2000 units. Even if the producer was seeing an average of \$10 back

on each copy sold, you're still talking \$20,000 max, plus foreign deals. The foreign deals add up, but they take a long time, and usually if foreign is good, domestic is bad, and visa versa. Now with Hugh and I combined, we can increase numbers. And we also become a more legitimate force. So now maybe some of these bigger outlets will listen to us. There is strength in numbers.

Hugh has Draculina, his catalog sales, and catalog sales with others. I deal more with the subs and the video stores, as well as selling foreign territories. Combining like this really is a good step in the right direction for creating a strong b-movie distribution company, especially for these ultra low-budget movies, because good representation has been so hard to find.

and when you approach a Media Play with one title, they aren't going to want to set up an account with you. Approach them with 25, 30, or even more, then they might just listen. By pulling together, then pulling some more of these movie makers together, and subsequently increasing our catalog, then they've got to listen. The b-movie independents working right now are a talented bunch, and the fans are there. They just

can't always find the stuff.

HUGH GALLAGHER: After completing TENDER FLESH, the first movie I've helped produce on film, I've been in contact with cable reps and TENDER FLESH is now being shopped around for potential cable sales. This is a new door to open - although the majority of movies out there on the really low-budget level wouldn't be up to cable standards (or down to cable standards, depending on how you look at it), this is still another area of sales that we could cover with the right film.

RB: We aren't looking to pick up everything on an exclusive basis. I usually have picked up any movie where I thought the talent was really there. A movie that showed some kind of skill, some sort of love towards movie-making and entertaining. So I have picked up some comedies and other type genre stuff outside of horror. I felt that for that movie to even have a chance, for it to ever find the right exposure, that it had to be directly in my hands. And that is our guidelines. 1) It's a good movie. 2) It is right for our markets. What we propose is this:

- 1) We take over all rights.
- 2) We take over either domestic or foreign individually on an exclusive basis.
- 3) We deal with you on a per deal basis for both foreign and/or domestic: \$5,000 or less, we take a 50% cut of all net profits. \$5,001 or more, we take 25% of all net profits.
- 4) Or, we can negotiate a "no rights deal," where we receive wholesale info from you, we list

it in each our catalogs and each our web sites or wherever, and place orders as stock is needed. Because we take no rights, we don't put the extra work and money into promoting your product beyond our immediate outlets. Sales are smaller in volume, but naturally we can't take everything, and this way you still make some money for your efforts. Additionally, there is still the option we might negotiate specific deals with your product, like through self-thru outlets and/or video store chains. Maybe even additional foreign deals. And this also allows you to offer your product up to other subs on a non-exclusive basis as well since no rights are assumed! Usually, with this option, we will list any movie that comes our way, regardless of content or quality. This is just our way of being one self-contained outlet for every current b-movie being made out there.

HG: With the first option we would simply buy your movie outright. We agree upon a set price with you and it is cut and dry. Obviously we're not Warner Brothers (at least not yet), so we are talking reasonable buy out prices for low-budget movies. Don't think you are going to shoot something for nothing and then we're going to hand you over a check for mega bucks! The 80s are long gone, and so are deals like that. But we will look at your movie, discuss the options and see if we can come to terms. Every movie sent to us is treated individually - we look at all the angles and then decide which deal will best suit you and us. We're not out to screw anyone, or get screwed ourselves!

RB: In addition, we help with promotion: Hugh through his extremely popular DRACULINA, as well as his newly created web site (<http://www.draculina.com>). I, myself, through my online

equivalent of the old INDEPENDENT MOVIES magazine - DARK GALLERY ONLINE. Movie makers write articles on their movies, and I post them quarterly on the site, along with color stills. The magazine gets over 50,000 hits in a quarter! I am also starting a new snail-mail magazine called B-MOVIE THEATER, named after the web site I started three years ago (<http://www.wb-movie.com>), that should launch this October. So, at the very least, you become highly visible through us alone. But we also know many of these other magazines publishers, we work closely with them, and many times are good friends with them. So we offer them up materials that might fit in with what they have, and by talking to them and knowing them directly, we increase your chances for exposure! Many of these guys are actively looking for this stuff for reviews and articles to help fill their magazines, or just because they heard something was pretty cool. But they can't find it! And when we send them these movies, they are usually more than glad to get them.

HG: I'm also looking to start some major advertising campaigns in some bigger magazines where we can introduce these films to the retail buying public. I believe the combination of a strong retail campaign along with a store push will get many movies a lot more money than an individual could generate simply trying to distribute his or her own film.

RB: We also have other key filmmakers behind us, and these guys are seasoned veterans who have lost their share of bitter battles in the b-movie distribution trenches, but overall have won many wars when it came to finding sales and financial success: Kevin Lindenmuth (ADDICTED TO MURDER) and Tim Ritter (TRUTH OR DARE, KILLING

SPREE). Most people who know Kevin know of his promotional successes and his famous Blockbuster deal (they picked up over 2,000 units of ADDICTED - as far as I know he was the first, and one of the only to do it with a movie of this type). Tim, of course, is a legend. His movies tend to outsell anyone's I have ever known, usually at a 2:1 ratio over the next best seller! Tim has been doing this for years, and he has also encountered many of the pitfalls, so he's bitter and sick of the whole distribution angle, but his experience, knowledge and wisdom have been key to helping my company grow in the past two and a half years. If I owe anyone for my success beyond my own, it's him.

HG: The thought of getting into producing movies for our specific markets is also an idea in the works. I've helped produce one film in Spain this year, and we have two more that will be filmed later this year. I would like to bring this to the states with low-budget videos. This doesn't mean we're interested in looking at every script from every person that wishes to make a movie! Obviously, if you have a track record of making movies, where we can see what you have done in the past, we'll be more interested in possibly investing in your future. There are many things that we would have to look over before making any kind of commitment and needless to say, it's our money, so we are going to be VERY picky on what project we choose!

So, at this point, if you have a movie in need of some good distribution, send it to us so we can discuss the possibilities. Send a screener along with any pertinent material to:

**DRACULINA, PO BOX 587,
GLEN CARBON, IL 62034**

or

**SALT CITY VIDEO, PO BOX
5515, SYRACUSE, NY 13220**

SO, ARE YOU GOING TO MAKE A FILM OR SIMPLY TALK ABOUT IT?

by Kevin J. Lindenmuth

For every independent filmmaker who is actually making movies there are fifty would be independent filmmakers talking about making a movie. If you wish to start making films don't become one of these "yappers". Make your movie, even if you don't have as big a budget as you thought, even if you're waiting (and waiting!) for that big investor to come through (the likelihood is that he isn't) or even for that new digital video camera (which may indeed be double the cost of your proposed budget!) After all, the first rule on independent filmmaking is this: If you don't go out and do it yourself it isn't going to get done.

During my time in film school (University of Michigan, class of '87!) there was the pressure to make the "perfect" student film and the "talk" about how so and so was going to be directing this or doing that once they graduated. Often times these verbose individuals never got around to completing their masterpiece, opting for an incomplete or substituted their project for writing a script! During my initial foray into "professional video and

film" in *The Big Apple* I was surprised to encounter more of these types, only they were now working as fellow "Production Assistants" or "Gaffers" or "Tape Operators", who were all still going to make that film someday. Ten years later they are still talking the talk. And that's all it is—talk!

Moviemaking is not an easy thing—particularly on the micro-budget independent level. If I had to list everything that could possibly go wrong I'd be writing a book. But trust me when I say you should be prepared for the unexpected—like rain when you plan to shoot an outdoor scene, your actress suddenly getting mononucleosis, or one of your lights catching the apartment wall on fire. Accidents do happen—that's why they're called accidents.

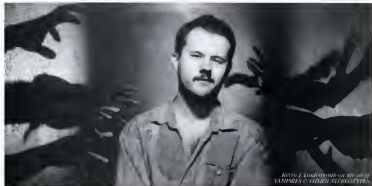
Thus, your script and shooting schedule has to have a bit of flexibility and most of all, must be possible to do (You probably can't do high-speed chases or blow up a ship). If you have lots of special makeup effects, for example, be prepared for these things to take time—hours and hours of time. There have been instances where

I waited five hours to complete a single shot.

The key to shooting a movie is to plan everything out as much as you can, have contingencies, and plan to shoot everything within a relatively short time (under two months) before your energy and enthusiasm of the other people you're working with, runs out. If you're not sure how to go about doing some of these things—such as casting actors or how to light a scene—go out and buy some books on the subject matter, and some of these books are better than others. Better yet, get the addresses or phone numbers of other filmmakers who have completed their own movies and pump them for information.

Once shooting is done there is the editing, which means finding somewhere to edit, getting sound effects, music and whatever visual effects you need, which could take half a year to a year to complete.

Once you have a finished film "In the Can" you can talk about it all you want. You're entitled to—you made a movie!



Kevin J. Lindenmuth on the set of *RAMPON* © CHRIS STRICKLAND

PLAY/x2

by R.K. SULTAN



BLOODLETTING

Starring Arianna Albright and James L. Edwards, with Sasha Graham and Scooter McCrae. Written, Produced, and Directed By Matthew Jason Walsh. Edited By JR Bookwalter. Executive producers JR Bookwalter and Arianna Albright.

This represents the feature length directing debut of Matthew Jason Walsh, longtime collaborator of the infamous JR Bookwalter. It was originally a 28 minute short titled "TVE KILLED BEFORE". (Also starring Arianna Albright and James L. Edwards) released by Salt City Video a while back. Though the entire picture has been reshot, many scenes were recreated exactly as in the original, while others were altered slightly. New material has been added, of course, to pump the production up to feature length.

BLOODLETTING opens promisingly enough at the aftermath of

seemingly unstoppable serial killer Butch Harlow's latest rampage. This is followed by a tour-de-force of opening credits featuring Faces Of Death styled clips intercut with movie gore effects all set to the ass-kicking metal/rock number, "Dream Of Witches," by the band, Darkside.

Okay, I'm impressed. Walsh has my attention 100%. Once he has it, however, he seems determined to lose it. The plot concerns a young woman named Serena (Albright) who witnessed the murder of her friend years earlier by serial killer Butch Harlow (James L. Edwards). She has now tracked him down under his new name (Walt Lipsky), got into his house, and gets him to admit his true identity. The reason for this quest is not revenge, as one might imagine, but rather due to the fact that she had her first orgasm ever, witnessing the murder. Now she wants Butch to teach her the ins and outs of being a serial killer. The plot is not intended to be a straight horror film, but somewhat of a black comedy, exploring the lives of these two psychos falling in love. It's a far fetched concept, granted. But, it worked surprisingly well as a short.

The problem with this feature is that every two minute kill scene is sandwiched between ten minutes of talking heads, as characters drone on to one another in hopes of padding this thing out to feature length. Excessive dialogue can take three forms, character development, plot development and padding. This is obviously padding. Even the one liners are lost amongst all the extra dialogue.

The "surprise" ending looks as though someone was brought in at the last minute to tack on an ending without ever looking at everything that had taken place in the script before. A second viewing does reveal one time when a bit of foreshadowing was given, but it so slight that it is easily missed.

True, the original short version had the exact same ending, but it goes down a little easier when you've only had 28 minutes to get to it. A fast paced short lends creditability to the shock ending. It's easier to accept having the rug pulled out from under you when you've only been there twenty some minutes, than it is when you're approaching the hour and a half mark.

Frankly, I'm surprised that Walsh would put all the time and effort into recreating this as a feature, and didn't see the ending was a major cop out that goes against everything he had just shown us.

The combination of Walsh's direction and JR's editing works quite well. But he should have looked at the script fully. Some things just don't carry over from one format to another. I hate to be so hard on Walsh, it is his first time in the captain's seat, but damn, he's been in the business for too many years to try and pull this off. He should have known better. Maybe next time. For now I would have to recommend the original short, (Which will be released again soon on the Salt City tape, DARK DESCENT) over this "remake".

SIDESHOW CINEMA PRODUCTIONS

"Comedy," Steve Martin once said, "is not pretty." Neither are most independent comedy flicks. It's one thing to gather a bunch of your friends together, get some kitchen knives, a few bottles of catsup, and whip up a horror movie. Maybe that's why there's so many of the damn things. It's quite another thing to produce a comedy feature that is based on something more than pure slapstick routines. The results of such endeavors, more often than not, are indeed, "not pretty". It's best left to a professional, and definitely not something to try at home.

That is exactly why Mike Legge and the crew at Sideshow Cinema are so invaluable to this independent world. Legge and his cohorts have been producing some of the best low budget comedy for over a decade. Their work is well thought out, well acted, and extremely enjoyable. Legge has a knack of looking at the mundane day to day and seeing it in a logical, if distorted light. Another unique aspect to Legge's work is that he does this all without ever falling back on toilet humor. It's hard enough to be funny. But funny without vulgar, now that's a novelty. The following are a few reviews from some of their earlier works. Hopefully we'll be able to update you with more current releases in a future issue.

WORKING STIFFS

Starring Beverly Epstein, Bruce Harding, Michael Legge, and Michael

McInnis. Written and Directed By Michael Legge.

There's something slightly out of place with the Temps working for Consolidated Temps Company. They never seem to tire, nor feel any pain, they don't think of themselves, only the company. In fact they are the perfect employees. Except of course, that they're dead. Con Temps has solved those pesky employee demand problems, by murdering their new employees and then returning them as members of the living dead. No pension, no worker's comp, no paycheck.

If this seems impossible, I'd like you to think of those clerks behind the counter of the local 7-11. Ever notice they're only there a few weeks, the can't quite speak in complete sentences, and they are always so goddamned happy? 'Hello my friend! Sounding a little more believable now?

The problem is even zombies get sick of working for someone else. Think about it. You're capable of working round the clock without ever getting tired. Why should someone else get all the benefits? I mean you're not going to retire (unless of course you eat salt, then you expire). A zombie revolt like you've never seen before.

LOONS

Starring James O'Brien, Linda Baxter Hardey and Dnane Mela. Written and Directed by Michael Legge.

Begin in the 1600's with a witch trial. The residing judge, August Loon, sentences Hepzibath Crowley to death. Crowley was a real witch, however, and through the flames lays down a curse of insanity on the judge and his male descendants. After a flash forward scan of this male bloodline throughout history, we arrive at the present time, with Jeff Coukous, the current male member of the Loon bloodline. Jeff's brother, Jasper was born crazy as, well, crazy as a loon. Suddenly Jasper goes sane as Jeff himself falls victim to the curse. (He sees everyone as a circus clown now!)

The only way to break the curse is to bring back old Hepzibath, but that is easier said than done. A loony (pardon the pun) flick filled with bizarre images and goings on, not to men-

tion time travel. This is a great example of Legge's disoriented view of the world, and how much fun it can be.

CUT THROATS

Starring Alan Kennedy, Mary Ellen Maloney, James Porter and Bruce Henshaw. Written and Directed by Michael Legge.

Don Drinkwater (Kennedy) is a present day worker in a modern office. His likable boss, Bill, is far too lenient, and soon replaced by a ruthless cut throat weasel named Rotman who takes downsizing to it's extreme. For anyone who's had to work under a new boss hell-bent on downsizing, this tape hits too close to home.

Rotman rules with an iron fist taking no prisoners. Bill, who can't sleep at home frequently finds himself dozing off at work, and fears he may be the next casualty. His dreams are full of absurd imagery, and hints toward the final outcome of the picture. Despite Bill's displeasure with the new working conditions, he and his coworkers quietly take what is given to them as their fate until the coffee pot is removed. That is just too much. A mutiny worthy of the Bounty takes place. Downsize and reorganize, all you want. Just don't mess with the office coffee pot and expect to get away with it. The ending itself is stroke of genius. A second viewing will reveal enough hints to make it obvious, though you'll never see it coming the first time around.

RAVAGE

Starring Mark Brazeale, Dan Rowland, Diana Harris and Frank Alexander. Written by Bryon Blabely and Ronnie Sorter. Directed By Ronnie Sorter.

From the heart of Missouri there comes a force to be reckoned with in the independent scene. Borderline Entertainment follows their first two releases (SINISTER and LIVING A ZOMBIE DREAM) with a nonstop, balls to the wall action picture that will set new standards in independent action flicks. This is no PR hype. I don't make a dime if this picture makes a million. This is the straight up Honest-To-God truth.

Widowed father Gregory Burroughs (Mark Brazeale) comes home from a dinner date to face ev-

ery parents greatest fear. His fifteen year old daughter's boyfriend is dead on the front steps. Inside no one answers his calls. Upstairs Gregory finds his ten year old daughter dead on the bedroom floor. Standing over her body is a wild-eyed man holding a knife to his fifteen year old daughter's throat. He talks the man into laying the knife down, only to watch in a split second of horror as this wryly bastard snaps her neck, and then manages to escape.

Gregory Burroughs is a criminal psychologist. His job is to make sense of this kind of thing. But it's not so easy when it's your life. His path for retribution will lead him straight into the underbelly of society's sickest subhuman form, thrill killers. I can't tell you anymore about the plot without giving away stuff you're better off learning for yourself.

Sorter's directional style reminds one of John Woo—Breakneck speed tension punctuated with unbeatable action sequences. RAVAGE delivers the goods where so many bigger budget pictures fail. It really does keep you on the edge of your seat. Put in the tape and leave the remote alone. You won't be fast forwarding through any of this, and you won't be getting up to go to the bathroom, either.

If you are a fan of pure adrenaline inducing movies, you won't be disappointed. If you are thinking of creating an action flick, this should be your final exam. See how good it can



be.

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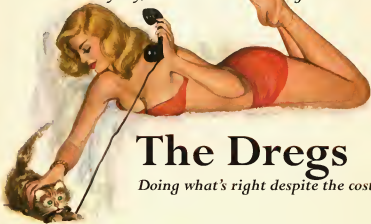
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